

And they came. They came from Georgia and Alaska. They came from North Carolina and Alabama. They came from 47 States in the Union. Out of the devastation of these fires came the tremendous courage and help of thousands of Americans who worked valiantly throughout this tragedy.

In total approximately 7,000 firefighters risked their own lives to save the lives and homes of the people of Florida. Fortunately out of 170 injuries that these firefighters suffered only one was serious.

Greg Born, from Alabama, suffered the worst injuries of the firefighting effort. While in the field he was struck by a falling tree. The weight of the tree broke his arm and fractured his neck. He is still in a cast and neck brace.

To Greg and all the other brave souls that fought the wildfires in Florida I say thank you, and if your States are ever in need you can call on us. We'll be there.

To the citizens of my district who opened their homes, their helping hands, and their hearts I say "thank you"!

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I rise today to offer my most heartfelt sympathy to the victims of the fires that are ravaging parts of Florida. Recent comments by the director of emergency management services for Brevard county seem to say it all: "This is a war."

He sounded like a soldier whose position was about to be overrun by enemy forces. "We've got fronts on the north and the south."

The destruction has already climbed into the millions. The fires have destroyed, for example, more than \$190 million of commercial timber. Drought conditions have caused more than \$135 million in damage to crops like corn, cotton, and peanuts.

Many houses and private property have been destroyed, and thousands of people have been displaced, or forced to temporarily relocate to avoid the wildfires. Recently, about 40,000 residents of northeast Florida were forced to flee in the wake of wind-swept embers as brushfires consumed—or threatened to consume—many rural areas.

In early July alone, Volusia and Brevard counties have been experiencing the worst of about 1,600 fires of varying sizes and degrees of containment that raged around the State. And, just like my home State of Texas, with no rain or lower temperatures in sight, state officials said the situation may worsen before it gets better.

Thus, in the past month, the State of Florida has suffered from an onslaught of drought and wild fires, leading to the destruction of 500,000 acres of land, 367 homes and 33 businesses, and the injury of 95 people, the majority of whom are firefighters.

H. Con. Res. 298 expresses Congress' deepest condolences to the State and people of Florida for the losses suffered as a result of the wild land fires occurring in June and July; and it expresses congressional support to the State and people of Florida as they overcome the effects of the fires.

This measure also commends the heroic efforts of firefighters from across the Nation who have traveled to Florida to battle the fires, and commends the many government agencies who have also lent their support. It is a good piece of legislation that deserves to be supported.

Mr. Speaker I urge my colleagues to adopt H. Con. Res. 298.

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers at this time, and I

would just strongly support the passage of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BEREUTER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 298.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 298, expressing condolences to Florida.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

RELATING TO THE IMPORTANCE OF JAPANESE AMERICAN RELATIONS

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 392) relating to the importance of Japanese-American relations and the urgent need for Japan to more effectively address its economic and financial problems and open its markets by eliminating informal barriers to trade and investment, thereby making a more effective contribution to leading the Asian region out of its current financial crisis, insuring against a global recession, and reinforcing regional stability and security, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 392

Whereas the maintenance and improvement of a very positive international relationship between the United States and Japan is vital to the two countries and to the entire global economic and trading system;

Whereas the United States-Japan Security Alliance and close economic cooperation have underpinned the security, stability, and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region, thereby allowing that region to enjoy unmatched economic growth and development for nearly three decades;

Whereas the current financial crisis in Asia threatens the foundation of Asia's unmatched peace and prosperity, the stability of the global economic system, and related vital American security and economic interests;

Whereas, although the Government of Japan's \$128,000,000,000 economic stimulus and tax reduction package of April 24, 1998, includes numerous provisions designed to promote consumer spending and industrial growth, it is by no means clear that these measures will restore economic growth or will be targeted at the most productive sectors of the economy;

Whereas Japan's generous contributions to second line credits for the three International

Monetary Fund program countries, South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia, totaling \$19,000,000,000, and its substantial structural adjustment loans and export credits to Indonesia, have helped contain the financial crisis, but are an inadequate alternative to a strong Japanese economy;

Whereas Japan accounts for three-fourths of the total East Asian Gross Domestic Product and therefore has the potential to help pull the region out of the financial crisis by serving as its "engine of growth", just as the United States, by being an "engine of growth" and having open markets, earlier assisted Mexico emerge from a substantial financial crisis;

Whereas a further weakening of the yen could trigger a round of competitive devaluations among Japan's Asian neighbors;

Whereas deteriorating economic conditions and ongoing financial market turbulence in Asia make it increasingly important that Japan play a leadership role in helping to restore confidence in the economic future of the region;

Whereas that regional leadership role coincides with Japan's stated goal of promoting strong domestic demand-led growth and avoiding a significant increase in its external trade surplus;

Whereas Japan's continued economic stagnation depresses the level of its imports from the United States and other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, thereby forcing its neighbors in the region to rely more heavily on their exports to the United States for growth;

Whereas weakened economic fundamentals in Japan and an accommodative monetary policy, coupled with a robust United States economy, have weakened the value of the Japanese yen against the United States dollar and therefore stimulated a rapid expansion of exports and a fast-growing merchandise trade surplus with the United States, which increased from \$48,000,000,000 in 1996 to \$55,000,000,000 in 1997;

Whereas the bursting of Japan's investment bubble in 1991 has been accompanied by protracted asset-price and balance sheet adjustments by Japanese financial institutions, leading to a scarcity of credit and weak growth;

Whereas policies favoring low interest rates had encouraged, until recently, excessive private sector lending to overly indebted enterprises in Indonesia, Korea, and Thailand, and thereby contributed to the private debt crisis in the region;

Whereas past efforts to stimulate recovery through deficit spending targeted at the construction sector have proved inadequate and failed to accomplish their desired objectives;

Whereas inadequate deregulation initiatives have failed to restore vitality to the Japanese economy, while truly significant deregulation could add as much as a percentage point or more to Japanese economic growth; and

Whereas the continued failure of the Government of Japan to properly recognize and remedy the aforementioned policies will both prolong the Asian financial crisis and contribute to the inevitable rise in the American trade deficit with Japan, thereby potentially undermining American domestic support for close economic, political, and security cooperation and coordination between the United States and Japan at a critical point in history: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that Japan should urgently undertake the following steps to enhance alliance cooperation and raise Japan to the position of regional partnership that it should enjoy by virtue of its economic size, technological achievements and its democratic political system:

(1) Undertake a broader and faster deregulation of its economy, in order to improve long-term growth prospects and promote opportunities for foreign firms, improve transparency and disclosure, reward innovation and competition, and reduce systemic risk.

(2) Further open its distribution system to eliminate exclusionary and discriminatory business practices that are not only limiting imports